

Learning Places Summer 2019

SITE REPORT #1

name of site report

NAMING PROTOCOL. When saving and posting your site reports on OpenLab, please follow the following format: SiteReport#.LastnameFirstname. Here's an example: SiteReport2.SwiftChristopher.



Select a meaningful image to that captures your perception of the site we visited and provide a caption explaining what the image is.

STUDENT NAME:

Darwin Cruz

SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. What are some general observations about the character of this place? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

Some general observations that I was able to see this place was that it was surprisingly clean. It's not that I was going in, thinking the place would be dirty or polluted, but when I did see the big pile of trash, I was surprised by how clean "our side" of land was. It was two completely different sides of a coin. I was also surprised by how "clean" the water were here, compared to the water at the Gowanus Canal. There were plants growing near the water, and even some creatures living nearby, compared to the decaying plants and toxic waters at Gowanus. Another observation is that, the site had a good amount of nature. There were trees, and small plants growing in almost every part of the area. When seeing Newtown Creek, it reminded, and also made me feel as if I was in Astoria Park. I live in Astoria, NY, and there's a park called Astoria Park that lives near the East River. Here, on the edge of the park, is the East River, and there are a lot of things that are similar between the two places. For example, some similarities are the big massive body of water. There are also a lot of boats that pass by, in both locations, even those those in Astoria Park, are mostly fancy boats, or fishing boats. And both at both locations, I can see more land in the distance. Looking at the Newtown Creek, reminded me and also made me feel as if I was in Astoria Park. This isn't a place where everyone can relate to, since it's in Astoria, but since I do, I experienced quite a bit throughout my life.

2. Historically, what are some of the important developments that have created the current environmental situation at Newtown Creek area. Refer not only to the reading and Prof. Spellane's lecture, but also what you learned on the Newtown Creek Alliance tour (hint... estuaries, for instance)?

One important developments that have created the current environmental situation at Newtown Creek area is that amount of pollution there. Over time, Newtown Creek are becoming an area with trash is living with society, in a way. The amount of "clean" area is getting lower and lower, increasing pollution. As John McLaughlin, author of Restoration Ecology, he states that, "Historically, there were approximately 1,200-acres of tidal wetland along the banks of Newtown Creek – today there are zero – representing a 100% loss of tidal wetland habitat and associated functions" (McLaughlin). There is even a huge big pile of trash near the nature walk, and I saw some of it falling into the waters. Even though the waters aren't as polluted, compared to the waters at the Gowanus Canal, the waters still get polluted and can be toxic. Especially in rainstorms, where all the water are carried over with the heavy winds and increasing water levels.

3. In what ways is the natural environment contained or shaped by the architecture of the Newtown Creek Nature Walk? In what ways is the natural world repossessing, interacting with, or invading spaces that have been over-polluted or industrialized?

Throughout the nature walk, one way that the natural environment is contained or shaped by the architecture of the Newtown Creek Nature Walk, is by modernizing it. Once people get inside, there are a small stones, which are supposed to be chairs, and some tables, where people can sit, talk, eat, etc. the environment is making some stones like chairs, and place tables around. Some stones are placed in a semicircle, facing the water, surrounded by willow trees. They want the environment and people to be together. And the tables are placed in where they can see the flowers, but also the big buildings in the background. This is likely one way that the environment shaped by the architecture of the Newtown Creek Nature Walk. The environment is blending with the Newtown Creek, even in unexpected places. For example, as we were walking downhill, passing by the huge parking lot, filled with Spectrum cars, I was able to see some life coming out of the concrete. They were likely willow trees, beginning the sprout, out of the floor and start growing. The natural world, has a say in this, whether we like it or not.

4. Discuss the program of the nature walk. How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?

At Newtown Creek, the program of the nature walk is to inform people, such as a museum. I believe this because the program of this space because throughout the walk, there are several signs giving information and showing history that was once recorded. The Nature walk's program wants their visitors to be aware of this historic piece of New York. I would want to do it in this type of way, because Newtown Creek, has a lot of history that a good amount of New York residents don't know about. I would like others to know of it's background history, or at least it's existence. Here, people are meant to interact with not only with one other, but also with the environment. For example, on the stairs, there are some high marsh plants growing. Normally, some will cut it off, but disable that part of the area. But luckily, they are meant to be viewed up close up, and interactive with.

5. If you were to stage a performative intervention in a *specific* site (i.e., a single structural aspect of the walk or industrial remains) where would you stage it and why (how does the environment add meaning to the performance)?

If I were to perform a type of performance in Newtown Creek, I believe that the best type of performances that would best fit this specific site, would be a music type of performance. I would like my performance to be music based because in the site, there, one very iconic area that I found to be very vocal. That place, or "stage", in other words, would be in the place near the start of the Nature walk. On the corner at the beginning, there is a big circle in the ground,

with some surrounding walls around it. Standing on the circle, can actually have an impact on your voice, making it louder. I believe doing my music performance here, would be a good fit, since it already makes an echo effect, and makes your voice louder, when standing there, it could be good as a mic. Singers, can stand here and have a naturally mic, due to the structures around the circle, and sing or perform the performance.

6. What message would your performance convey and who needs to hear this message?

In my interactive performance, the message that I would like to convey would probably be about the plastic pollution that was presented at the site. At the site, there was a big pile of trash, piled up in the distance. Even though we were watching from a distance, the pile was *still* pretty big, even from far away. This is the type of message I would like my performance to portray. I would like my performance to have some type of metaphor. Something that the audience hopefully can walk around and think about, either the message of the performance.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project.

Questions might relate to architectural or environmental observations, socio-political problems and/or solutions, demography, history, zoning, civic processes, performance strategy, etc.

1. Question?

Why are Newtown Creek's water so polluted?

2. Question?

Why is there a lack of support for cleaning out the Newtown Creek?

3. Question?

How Newtown Creek's water were impacted by pollution?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and **revise** one of your research questions for further research. Refine your question following from examples that we've discussed in class.

Revised Research Question:

How Newtown Creek become a victim of pollution?

Find and cite 2 sources that address your question in [MLA format](#). Respond to the questions below.

CITATION 1:

Leonard, AnneE., and Peter Spellane. "Using Old Maps and New Methods to Discover the Early Chemicals and Petroleum Industries of Newtown Creek in New York City." *Journal of Map & Geography Libraries*, vol. 9, no. 1/2, Jan. 2013, pp. 25–43. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/15420353.2012.726205.

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

I chose this source because I believe that it answered my question pretty simple. and even address some solutions that can be useful to Newtown Creek. In the text, authors, Anne E. Leonard and Peter Spellane, talk about Newtown Creek and it's polluted state. They state that companies were a big factor into the pollution of Newtown Creek. For example, the authors state that, "Also in 2010, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) added Newtown Creek to the Discovering the Early Industries of NYC's Newtown Creek 27 National Priorities List specified by CERCLA (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act), making Newtown Creek a Superfund Site and initiating the process of discovery and remediation of the site's apparent large-scale and chemically diverse pollution" (Leonard 26). Here, the authors are saying that Newtown Creek become pollution has gotten worse overtime, with it's chemically diverse pollution.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

I choose this source because it was able to prove a lot of points that relate to my research question, The author seem to know what they were talking about because a lot of the information in the article was information relating to the nature walk.

CITATION 2:

Navarro, Mireya. "U.S. Cleanup is Set for Creek Long Polluted by Industry." *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, Sep 28, 2010, pp. 2. *ProQuest*, <https://rpa.laguardia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.rpa.laguardia.edu/docview/1461217167?accountid=11946>.

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

I chose this source because it explains a small amount of history of the pollution that happened to Newtown Creek. For example, according to the author, Mireya Navarro, they say that, "The creek's polluted condition also reflects countless oil spills from the dozens of refineries and fuel storage centers that have operated along the banks since the 19th century" (Navarro). Here, the author is explaining a bit of history on the creek's polluted waters. This relates to my research question because it shows how companies only use the creek as a way to get rid of *their* waste. It wasn't the creek's fault, or nature fault, but companies for treating the creek as a trash can.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

I believe that this source is credible because it seems to be part of a New York Times newspaper.

What further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for additional sources?

Some further sources of information that would help answer my question would probably be looking into the health risks due to the pollution. This can help understand the risk, we and the government can take in order to restore or clean out the pollution.